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CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM ★ LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO ★ PLP

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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Fighting Fascism in India

AVENGE CAPITALIST MURDER!

INDIA, February 22—Students rose up today against the capitalist-caused suicide of 26-year-old Rohith Vemula, a Dalit left-wing student protester at the Nehru University (JNU) in Hyderbad. The rise and suppression of student protests demonstrate the growing fascist dictatorship here and, more important, the growth of widespread resistance.

Rohith, Anti-Racist Fighter

Rohith Vemula was a Hindu from the lowest caste group, the Dalit (formerly known as "untouchables"), who was protesting against the Hindu nationalist organization Hindutva and their activities.

A right-wing student group, the ABVP (All-Indian Student Council), allied with the pro-fascist Hindutva party RSS (National Patriotic Organization), had shut down a film screening that exposed the complicity of government officials in an anti-Muslim riot in Uttar Pradesh (state in northern India) that killed at least 100 and left tens of thousands homeless.

Rohith was protesting that anti-Muslim racism as well as the 2012 execution of a Muslim for supposed involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. After a conflict broke out at the demonstration, Rohith and his four friends were suspended from school, while the upper-caste students from the nationalist group were not punished at all.

In protest, a multi-caste group of students pitched a camp in front of the university. They called their camp Velicada, or Dalit Ghetto. Many consider Rohith's suicide to be his last symbol of protest—and yet another example of racist discrimination against Dalits. Students have taken to the streets and the hashtag #dalitlivesmatter.

Nationalism, Tool of the Bosses

At Nehur University in Dehli, students were given permission to hold a rally protesting the death penalty decision against the alleged Muslim terrorist. Contrary to reports by the bosses' media, these student protesters were not pro-terrorist; they objected to how the government conducted the trial. Thirty minutes before the rally was scheduled to begin, the university revoked its permission. Students then went to the canteen in the cafeteria area, where political discussions are a common custom. Some students held up posters and shouted slogans that the Indian government considered "treason" because they criticized the government's role in Kashmir.

JNU Students break police barricades. Women and men battle police

The police arrested Kanhaiya Kumar, a leader of the student group, even though he was not present at any of the protests. Kumar was assaulted in the courtroom while the police did nothing, another indication of the breakdown of capitalist law and the move toward open fascism. The government crackdown against the student movement reflects the critical role of Hindu nationalism in sustaining the capitalists' rule.

The role of Hindu nationalists is not simply to attack the Muslim working class, but in fact to suppress the whole working class. We are divided by caste, religion and nationalism when we need

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OUR FIGHT

★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

★Only the dictatorship of the working class — communism — can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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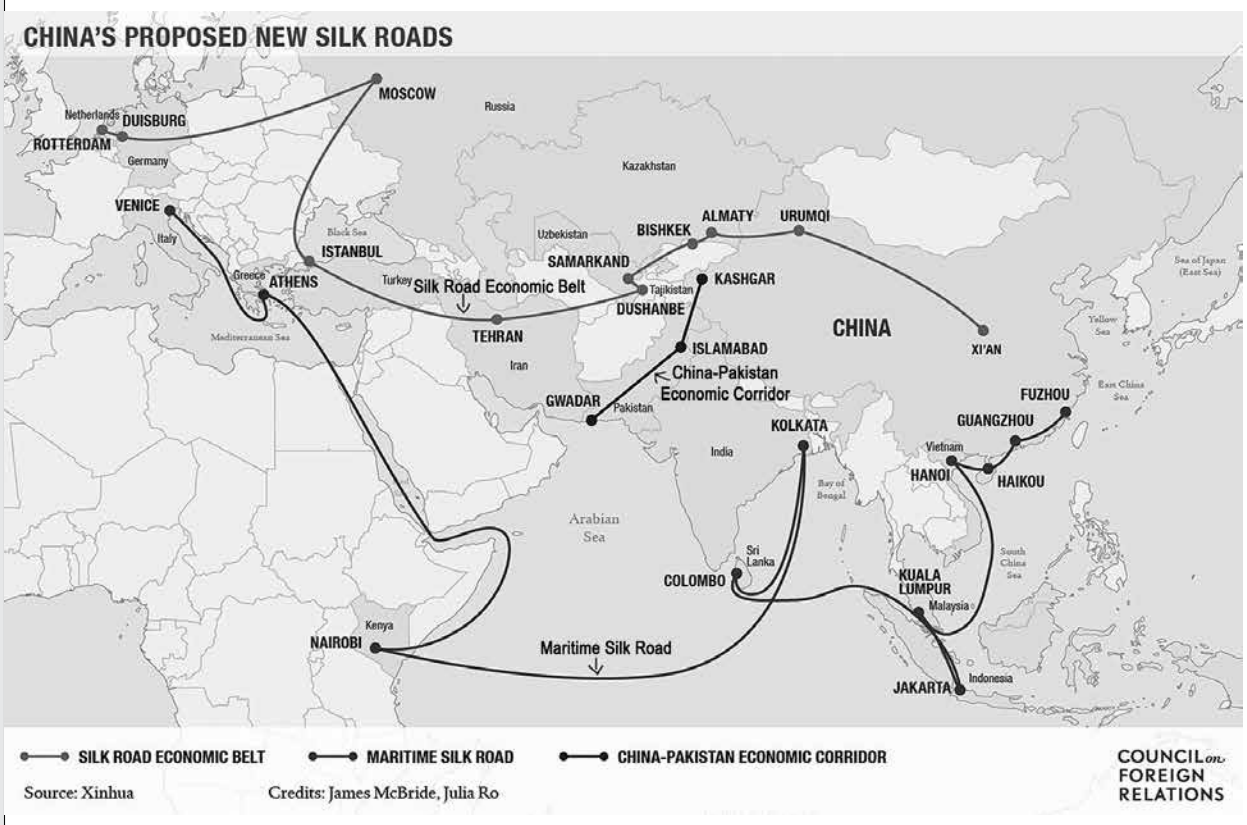
Editorial

Mapping Imperialist War



National borders are drawn by the capitalist rulers to serve the profit system and divide the international working class. These borders—and the "countries" they define—are repeatedly redrawn through imperialist war. This is the essence of the latest tensions in the South China Sea. As CHALLENGE goes to press, the U.S. capitalist media is raising alarms over the Chinese capitalists' deployment of advanced missiles and fighter jets on a disputed island chain called the Paracels.

Workers have no side in this dispute, which signifies another step toward inter-imperialist war.

Profit and Blood

For the U.S. and Chinese bosses, the South China Sea dispute is a typical capitalist conflict. Each side attempts to justify imperialist aggression with treaties and laws that favor its respective empire. An ExxonMobil-funded policy group, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), warned:

> *This marks a historical turning point…[T]he United States finds itself in a competition among great powers…. It is more important for the United States to increase its own military presence in the Baltic states and the South China Sea….[G]round troops constitute a more credible demonstration of U.S. power, because they advertise the country's willingness to shed blood to honor its commitments (March/ April 2016).*

Whose blood are the U.S. bosses willing to shed? Workers' blood! The capitalists ruling China are more than willing to do the same. Both sides are working overtime to build nationalism to enlist our working-class sisters and brothers to support their imperialist ambitions.

The U.S. bosses' empire is in relative decline and mired in political crisis. As reflected by the turbulent U.S. presidential campaign, leading forces of U.S. finance capital—ExxonMobil, Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase—are struggling to impose political unity on their own ranks to shore up U.S. imperialism. But they cannot rebuild their war machine and defend their empire without the political loyalty of U.S. workers. They cannot fight the next big global war without workers as cannon fodder.

But there is an alternative for our class. The revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party is organizing a mass movement—from the U.S. to Mexico, Africa, Pakistan, and China—for working-class power. Our goal is to build a Red Army that will smash the capitalist system once and for all.

A mass PLP must be organized within the bosses' military war machines, to spread communist politics until soldiers can "turn the guns around" and fight for their class. The Chinese bosses' so-called People's Liberation Army fields 1.6 million soldiers, the world's largest ground force. As China's rulers expand the PLA's high-tech elements (including surface-to-air missiles and electronic warfare), and the risk of confrontation between the U.S. and China grows, our military work becomes even more crucial for the international working class.

A Silk Road to Imperialist War

The Chinese rulers' military deployment in the Paracel Islands, and their claims on the South China Sea, reflect a growing boldness in their projection of imperialist power. As they attempt to win workers across Asia and the Middle East with empty promises of a better life, the Chinese imperialists have advanced an ambitious plan called "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR). It's been called the "New Silk Road," in reference to the ancient trade route from Asia to Europe.

> *As projected, OBOR will link Central Asia and the Middle East and Europe via massive infrastructure and commercial projects. They will be funded by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), China's rival to the U.S.-backed World Bank. China President Xi Jinping's first official visits of 2016 were to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran, all founding members of the AIIB (China Central Television, 1/18/16).*

China claims that OBOR will deliver prosperity for workers in the Middle East. But the Chinese bosses' real concern is an acute labor shortage (Xinhua, 1/22/16). They see the Middle East's millions of young, unemployed workers as potential wage slaves to protect the capitalists' profit margins.

Land, Water and Oil

In addition to valuable oil reserves, Iran occupies a geostrategic position of increasing importance to China's growing imperialist ambitions. Decades of brutal economic sanctions on Iran's workers were lifted with last July's nuclear deal, which also freed Iran's bosses to purchase conventional weapons. Now China's bosses are keen to enlist Iran as a full member of their Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) military alliance.

> *It was China that helped Iran kick-start its nuclear weapons program back in the 1980s…[T]he two countries' military-industrial complexes have been close ever since, and one source… confirms that secret military protocols were also signed this week (Newsweek, 2/1/16).*

Sixty percent of China's imported oil is shipped over oceans patrolled by and vulnerable to the U.S. Navy and its fleets of warships. China's agreements with Iran include refinery and pipeline construction deals linked

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Avenge Capitalist Murder

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to unite as comrades in struggle.

While anti-worker hatred and violence is making news, it is class exploitation that needs to be exposed. This exploitation soars whenever there is an economic crisis and the bosses need to turn toward fascism. This is happening in India despite all the fake rhetoric about a prosperous middle class. Autoworkers and agricultural workers have been suffering. The jute industry is collapsing, with tens of thousands of workers losing their jobs or facing wage cuts to approximately USD $15 a week. At a recent protest by jute workers near Kolkata, a police attack critically injured a protest leader.

Students throughout India call for justice for Rohith Vemula and the release of Kanhaiya Kumar

One Working-Class Struggle, One Party

Resistance movements are beginning to connect the many attacks on the working class. Students at two universities in Kolkata are protesting in solidarity with students in Hyderabad and Delhi. Some students have begun to show more direct support for workers' struggles. In many parts of the country, the struggle against exploitation and oppression of women has also been growing in important ways.

As competition among the U.S., China and Russia intensifies, the Indian capitalist class will intensify its exploitation of workers here. They will use all kinds of racism, caste exploitation, and propaganda against different ethnicities in a desperate attempt to promote selfishness within the working class. Our allegiance must be to our working-class sisters and brothers, not our supposed race, ethnicity, or religion. All kinds of nationalism are suicide for the working class.

Only communist philosophy and strategy can free the working class. As long as there is capitalist exploitation for profit, there will be capitalist oppression to intimidate and divide the working class. We must dedicate ourselves to building a new international communist party that fights for equality and unity of all workers, across all borders. We PL'ers have dedicated ourselves to this for the past 50 years.

As PLP continues to grow throughout the world, including in South Asia, we can draw on the wisdom, experience and leadership of workers everywhere to build a Party that can put an end to all forms of class exploitation and oppression. Learn more about PLP—check out the website and contact us!

Our call to students, campus and education workers in the United States, Latin America, Africa, and everywhere there is a PLP base: Act in solidarity with the campus struggles in India! An attack on Rohith, Dalit students or Muslim workers is an attack on the whole working class. Fight back!✪

Uproar Over City's Racist Prison Project

INDIANA, February 11—Progressive Labor Party members giving communist leadership in a multiracial Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest here succeeded in disrupting board meetings at the local airport and zoning meetings at City Hall.

A local mayor's support for a bid to privatize a prison has since been retracted, a small but significant victory for this integrated group of antiracist fighters.

Reform victories under capitalism are by nature temporary. The limits of this one are plain to see: while a petition to build the prison within city limits has been retracted, the jailers continue to hunt around the Chicago metro area for a site to construct their new concentration camp.

For the past 30 years, this region has been crippled with purposeful de-industrialization and unemployment. This attack on jobs has a racist edge that cuts all working people. On the heels of communist-led union and militant antiracist fightback from the 1930s to the 1960s, for the first time tens of thousands of industrial jobs were opened in a major way to Black workers in this region. Capitalism's drive for maximum profit has driven many of these jobs overseas and left the remaining positions saddled with "two-tier" wage structures that lock out future generations from more decent living wages inherited from past class struggles.

Mayor Defends Racist Prisons

After a re-election (in which a little more than one-tenth of over 80,000 residents participated), the mayor released a statement saying she was in full support of the corporation's plan to build this prison camp close to a nearby airport. This liberal misleader initially defended her support of the prison by repeating the jailer's unsubstantiated claim that it would bring 200-300 jobs to the city. In her own words she "visited at least one of those facilities and they seem to treat people in a very respectful way." This claim was made in spite of the numerous complaints against Immigration and Customs Enforcement prisons for the vicious treatment of inmates, ranging from physical and sexual abuse to labor exploitation.

Some local fighters were surprised that she gave her upfront support to a prison project at a time when the racist mass incarceration of Black workers is widespread. In meetings and one-on-one conversations, PL'ers explained that the prison profiteers and the mayor were counting on the likelihood that residents in a predominantly Black city would buy into the faulty racist notion that immigration is "just a Mexican issue."

The struggle against this prison was waged by a multiracial antiracist coalition of fighters in the city. A major theme in the fightback was that of working-class solidarity among Black, Latin and white workers.

Leaders of these groups stated that the people of our town would not become "slave catchers," hunting Latin workers in the same fashion that Blacks had historically been hunted during slavery and continue to be treated by cops in our city.

Raising Communism Among the Masses

At mass meetings, a PLP member gave speeches about how change on a local level would not permanently stop businesses like the one we are facing or stop police killings. Only smashing the profit-over-people capitalist system will bring about true change for workers. The comrade said that voting was a bosses' tool to keep people complacent about their oppression, while spreading the illusion that they have actually done something in their own interests. After the forum, we distributed CHALLENGE.

The ongoing struggle inside the group is to increase our interaction with community members. Our local communist-led Black Lives Matter group conflicts with the BLM's national leadership and is proving that multi-racial unity in the fight against racism is crucial.

Having made contacts within the community via public meetings and knocking on doors, a more determined effort to build personal ties between those inside the BLM chapter and the PLP is our next order of business. The people in our neighborhoods are mindful of the strangle-hold that capitalism has over our lives. When we push the idea that only a mass movement of workers united to smash the racist and sexist system of capitalism — not liberal concessions — will end our suffering, our friends want to hear more. As we build class struggle together, these conversations will continue.✪

Fight Racist Special Education Speed-Up

NEW YORK CITY, February 22—When challenged by Progressive Labor Party and co-workers about the racist special education (SPED) speed-up at a Manhattan school meeting, the principal defended the school's racist set-up.

At this high school where Black and Latin students comprise 70 percent of the population, Black and Latin special education students embody over 85 percent. This school has a higher-than-average graduate rate of 90 percent. But of the students who don't receive a high school diploma, 91 percent of them are Black and Latin!

When confronted about this, the principal — fully aware of this racial breakdown — responded that this was an "acceptable" number. A PL'er exposed the principal's racist view that these students were expendable — "the price of doing business." The principal — though recently asked by the superintendent how he planned on raising the test scores — was clearly content with an education system set-up that failed students.

The PLP teacher is openly known in the school as a communist. He denounced the racism behind the administration's cuts in special education services.

Teachers Overworked, Students Underperform

Over half of the SPED teachers in the school are teaching an extra class — the bosses' shortsighted solution for the problem of too few SPED teachers on staff to provide the services our students need. A lack of services and overworked teachers are attacks that fall disproportionately on the shoulders of the school's Black and Latin students. This is representative of an overall trend throughout the city for SPED.

Looking forward, the school's incoming class of 9th graders next school year is expected to have the highest percentage of SPED students in need of extra services in the school's history. With full knowledge of this, and the extremely high annual SPED teacher turnover rate (the rate at which workers leave and are replaced), the school bosses have no plans to hire the needed number of SPED teachers. In fact, at this meeting the principal boasted that understaffing the SPED department and cutting funding from desperately needed SPED services would be the "new normal."

Cuts Are For War

This "new normal" spells out an escalating attack on students already beaten down by the school's racist policies. These cuts in education reflect the U.S. imperialists' real interests: oil and war. The U.S. war secretary Ashton Carter is seeking a $582.7-billion military budget for the fiscal year 2017 (reuters.com, 2/2/16). This number excludes other departmental military-related spending. In 2014, the total national "defense" spending was $613.6 billion (pogo.org). Meanwhile, education is allotted $100 billion, merely 2.7 percent of the budget (whitehouse.gov).

The PL'er said the high rate of SPED teacher turnover stemmed from overworking these teachers. The majority of the teachers who were coerced, required or intimidated by the school bosses to teach an extra course (in violation of contractual rights to decline teaching beyond the legal number of classes and work hours) are untenured (no permanent job), and so more subject to ill treatment. The United Federation of Teachers (the NYC teachers union) has sided with the principal on this, so the untenured teachers generally understand they have no rights and therefore live under daily stress and fear of the capitalist bosses' seemingly unlimited power to exploit their labor.

Real Failure: Capitalism

Under capitalism, not every student is expected to graduate, and in fact the profit system doesn't need or want every student to be "successful" in school. How will the bosses justify racist low wages and unemployment if they can't blame working-class youth for the system's own failure? How else will they funnel students into the military to kill for oil wars in the Middle East?

In reality, capitalist schools — through segregation, racist attacks, lack of funding, school-to-prison pipeline attacks on students, and anti-working-class curriculums — are what fail our young people.

The administration claims to work in students' interests. What a lie! Actually, teachers must ally themselves with student interests. We teachers need to unite with students and parents in order to fight these education attacks. Understaffing means less time with students, and increasing a teacher's caseload ensures that those students who need the most attention actually get less.

Clearly, capitalism doesn't value working-class youth. Teachers, parents, students and school workers can help build PLP and collectively organize against capitalism's relentless attack on the working class, and build a communist world.

Only in a communist society would all students, regardless of ethnic background and learning needs, be seen as worthy of the struggle to not only graduate, but to succeed in acquiring an education that not only meets the needs of an individual student but those of the entire working class.✪

Mapping War

Continued from page 2

to the Pakistani port city of Gwadar, where the Arabian Sea meets the Persian Gulf. An enormous operation financed, built and now controlled by China, Gwadar will route critical oil supplies to China over land, a safer bet than the 10,000-mile maritime route to Shanghai, the Chinese bosses' only commercial port.

Same Enemy, Same Fight

From Latin America to the Middle East, millions of workers have been killed and millions more forced to seek refuge by imperialist-fueled wars. No sooner do workers cross the imperialists' borders, in search of work and safety, than they face horrific anti-immigrant racism and sexism.

At the same time, workers within the borders of the U.S. and China, as well as Russia and Iran, are being coerced to fight and kill one another to defend the bosses' capitalist preserves. In every imperialist power, rulers are intensifying their racist, nationalist propaganda to blame workers from other countries for their problems. The bosses know their days are numbered if they cannot deflect workers' anger from the true cause of our misery: capitalist exploitation.

The working class has no country; our class has nothing to gain by respecting capitalist borders. Of all the political parties, only PLP represents workers' interests.

PLP calls for international working-class unity. PLP organizes and fights to turn the coming imperialist wars into class wars for communist revolution. PLP calls on workers in the U.S., China, and every capitalist country to distribute CHALLENGE at their workplaces and in their barracks. Join our party, and help lead the working class in communist revolution! Same enemy, same fight! Workers of the world unite!✪

Colombia: Crisis of Imperialism

COLOMBIA, February 24—The embattled imperialists, feeling the pressure from the current over productive crisis and the costs of war, are busy with their policies of super exploitation, racism, fascism, sexism, cultural degradation, and the pillage and destruction of the environment. All of this is done in order to try and solve their financial crisis. This has always been done with the aid of their puppet regimes all over the world.

In the case of Colombia, this means the imposition of miserable conditions for the working class; helped along by the sellouts in the trade unions who are totally complicit in these murderous policies.

The paltry minimum salary of about $207 (USD) a month is a far cry from the $8,000 monthly salary of congressmen, further evidence of the fascist and oppressive capitalist regime.

The commercialization of life in the health sector, where our class sisters and brothers are nothing more than statistics and thousands agonize and die waiting for a simple medical appointment, is still not even the worst that capitalism offers.

Hunger strikes millions who often live malnourished, not even eating what the pets of the wealthy enjoy. The setting could not be worse for our class who are left at the bottom of the social pyramid only to maintain this miserable, corrupt, and oppressive system. This system that uses sleight of political hand to fool workers into thinking capitalism is just, and where economics of "plenty and peace" reign supreme; all the while unleashing violence on those who do not tow the line.

The working class knows though, that the solution to our collective problems does not exist in this society. Workers know that the laws of capitalist profit contradict the peace or quality of life they deserve.

We in the PLP organize in the interest of the international proletariat and support all of their struggles. We do this with the recognition that only the eventual communist revolution will see an end to the dark night of capitalism. We do not fight to reform the system, but rather we organize for worker's power. What we want is everything we produce. We want no more fake pacifism between classes; the peace of the rich is oppression, death, and the decimation of the poor. JOIN PLP!✪

Thosands Take the Streets Against $100 Million Budget Cut

CHICAGO, February 4— Sixteen educators were arrested for sitting in at Bank of America.

Members Progressive Labor Party and thousands of school workers, parents, students, and other fighters filled the streets of downtown Chicago to protest a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) announcement of $100 million in new layoffs and pay cuts.

Bank of America is one of the banks that have pocketed a billion dollars from CPS that should have gone to fund the schools. These racist cuts primarily target Teachers' Assistants, who are among the lowest paid school workers and are mostly Black. However, the brunt of the attack falls on CPS students, who are mostly Black and Latin. They will receive fewer resources, larger classes, and less support in school.

CPS says they're Broke, Charity for Bankers is a Joke

The cause of these cuts? The racist CPS and the parasitic banks that feed off the working class. Banker and former school board chair David Vitale led CPS into a "toxic swaps" scheme, which resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars siphoned out of CPS and into banks' pockets. CPS refuses to take legal measures to get any of this money back, as governmental bodies in other cities have done successfully. They won't even ask to renegotiate the toxic swaps.

For too long, CPS has made financial deals that benefit banks and corporations at the expense of the city's mostly Black and Latin students, but lately it has gotten worse. The number one CPS cost is "debt service", representing billions of dollars in interest paid to banks and bondholders. The capitalist system is rigged this way: the rich pay little in taxes to support public services, and then make millions off the loans that service providers must take out to meet operating expenses.

Attack on One Is an Attack on All

Teachers in the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) have responded to this theft by organizing demonstrations and sit-ins. A key element of the CTU's strength is its alliance with other sections of the working class: the most recent demonstration involved not only education workers, but also members of several other unions and Black youth from the ongoing fight against racist police murders. The next day, teachers, transit workers, and home care workers distributed a common flyer calling on all workers to fight against state and local cutbacks.

Chicago teachers refuse to stick to demonstrating. In December, the teachers voted to allow leaders of CTU to call a strike, and now it's only a matter of time until it happens. Union members at many schools don't want to wait. They are ready to follow the lead of Detroit teachers and organize collective sickdays (see CHALLENGE 2/10).

Strike Against Capitalism

Strikes are an important step in building fightback and class-consciousness, but are limited. In 2012, Chicago teachers went on strike to demand, among many things, no layoffs and funding for smaller class sizes and key programs for students. Only four years later, they are fighting the same fight against the same budget cuts!

Unions also push the illusion that a different politician will make things better, when all politicians actually serve the interests of the capitalist class. "Hey hey, ho, ho, Rahm Emanuel's got to go" was a popular chant at today's march. Though Mayor Emanuel is a fierce supporter of the interests of the capitalists, focusing on electing some other capitalist representative obscures the root problem and stops workers from fighting to destroy the system.

Unions and strikes organize to make life minimally better for workers under capitalism, and any gains won through those means can be quickly taken away. When someone has cancer, doctors don't remove only part of the tumor; it will only grow back! The working class must fight to remove the entire cancer of capitalism and build a system where we can get all of our needs met. To smash racism and build schools that are actually set up for students to prosper, we need to destroy capitalism with a communist revolution.

Only Solution is Communist Revolution

Educators, students, parents, and other workers throughout the city are determined to continue the fight for better schools, but under capitalism, that is a limited fight. The capitalists promote schools that continue racist divisions (Chicago's schools, as well as others, are as segregated now as 40 years ago) and teach individualism and loyalty to the U.S. government. They prepare students to be good workers or good soldiers or in the most segregated, least wealthy schools, good prisoners. Until the working class runs society, the schools will serve the interests of the rich.

The militant actions will no doubt continue to develop in Chicago and open the door for more workers to learn about Progressive Labor Party and join us in our revolutionary struggle. At the march, hundreds of CHALLENGEs were distributed, and this is only the beginning. As the struggle heats up, we look forward to building the membership of PLP and spreading these ideas widely.✪

Haitian Revolution Relived by Retired Workers

NEW YORK CITY, February 17—Retired workers celebrated Black History Month by studying the Haitian Revolution and its influence of slave revolts in the U.S.

The group of multiracial retirees are part of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 371. Twenty-five retirees braved the inclement weather to listen to a former hospital worker about working-class heroism to not only overthrow slavery but also to fight for the complete liberation from the yoke of colonialism and imperialism. A lively question-and-answer period followed the presentation.

Masses Make History, Not One Leader

While many of us can name leaders, we don't know the many of as many 400,000 slaves in Haiti who fought and died for freedom. We were all aware of Toussaint Louverture, who led an army of masses of slaves in a successful revolt against French slavemasters from 1791-1794. But, it was the masses who made history, not the few leaders whose names have come down to us.

In 1794, because of the fight launched in Haiti, slavery had been abolished in all of the French colonies. When Napoleon's army invaded Haiti in 1802, it re-established slavery in all its colonies. Slavery was abolished in Haiti in 1804. But in the other French islands, slavery didn't end until 1848. The French bosses forced Haiti to pay crippling reparations for the loss of property—people and plantations—in return for recognition, 20 years after liberation. And the Haitian bourgeoisie forced the peasants, through taxation, to bear the cost of paying those $40 million, in today's U.S. currency. It was a warning for those who dared to fight back. The U.S. didn't recognize Haitian independence until 1861 in the midst of the Civil War and didn't abolish slavery in within its own borders until 1865.

Haitian Revolution Prompts U.S. Slave Revolt

We discussed the influence the Haiti Revolution and fight against colonialism had throughout the slaveholding world. It is important to understand how events that occur far away impact events locally. The slaveowners certainly understood that and trembled at the thought of slave uprisings.

In the U.S., one of the most famous was in Charleston, South Carolina in 1822, led by Denmark Vesey. News of the successful slave revolt in Haiti was widespread in the area after French planters fled Haiti with their slaves to the U.S. South. In fact, the plan of Vesey's rebels was to sail to Haiti after freeing themselves.

John Brown, the well-known abolitionist, was also influenced by the Haitian Revolution. The group Brown assembled chose to attack the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, West Viriginia in part because it was located in a valley. They knew that Haitian rebels went into the mountains to regroup after their attacks on slave plantations. Brown consoled himself when he was arrested by reading the biography of Toussaint Louverture.

History Informs Today's Politics

Some of the comments made by the audience were interesting as well. One retiree noted that to fight against slavery was a human trait, and that slaves even rebelled against the "good slavemasters." Someone else explained that there is no such thing as a "good" slaveowner.

One retiree stated that union members should support the Democratic Party to fight the good fight.

However, the speaker clearly noted that the only way to end any and all of the misery that capitalism creates is to unite and fight back in the heroic manner of the revolutionaries in Haiti. We must go all the way and get rid of this system once and for all. No capitalist party can eradicate racism; only an internaitonal communist party like Progressive Labor Party can—with the leadership of millions.

While Black History Month is a token time for the bosses to recognize Black workers' contribution to capitalism, the working-class should celebrate and study antiracist working-class history and the role of Black workers all year long. Let's take inspiration from the history of class struggle and resolve to fight against racism all year long!✪

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Communist School: 'One of the Happiest Moments in my Life'

Below is a sample of letters written by participants at a communist school. It was a first for many. Students as young as nine years old to workers in their seventies studied the origin of racism and how build a multiracial movement
(see article on page 7).

It was very fun. I like the study groups we had and that my group and me made a remix of "Rude" by Magic! and changed the lyrics to be about fighting back. I also like that we learned the history about racism and where and who made it. I liked that people of all ages and races came together and had a great time together, like playing basketball. I really enjoyed this weekend and hope to come next year.

★

I love to be around other people who believe that we need to fight for a new world. We cook, clean, live, hangout, and eat together. Every aspect of the weekend is a little glimmer of what living in a communist society would be like. I'm a single parent, and through the weekend, many people helped and cared for my daughter as their own, helping me participate more in workshops and activities. I loved seeing my students making friends and participating in workshops. This generation will change the world, and going to communist schools like this help bring us one step closer.

★

I had quite an experience. I communed with like-minded people. We lived together, cooked together, cleaned and learned together. I loved it. I feel stronger than I have felt in a while. I can see my views clearer with my comrades. I joined the Party!

★

When a comrade opened this weekend's cadre school asking what a "cadre" was, the first thing I thought about was our Party in Haiti. I've never been to Haiti and never met the comrades there, but I fee like I know them and am close to them through their articles and letters in CHALLENGE.

One of our comrades said that in Haiti, their word for "cadre" translates from Kreyol as "cultivator," meaning a cadre is a communist leader who job is to "cultivate" comrades and the masses to become revolutionary leaders.

That's the best definition of cadre I've ever heard and the best description of this weekend's cadre school. Multiracial, multigenerational comrades and friends fermenting on how to wage mass revolutionary struggle for communism—while cooking together, chopping wood for our fire together, and daring to open and trust each other with a bit of our personal lives together cultivated a rich weekend and more nails in the bosses' coffin.

On the last day, we welcomed several new comrades to the Party. Our comrade who initially asked about what a cadre was gave one of several moving speeches about what the weekend meant to him. We left the weekend planning how to cultivate many more comrades, and hoping the articles and letters they write reach and inspire comrades in other places we haven't been to, and haven't met yet.

★

After joining the Party last November in Ferguson, my commitment to fighting for communism has become primary in my life. With this increased level of work came more responsibility and opportunities to practice leadership alongside fellow Party members.

As a workshop leader at my first cadre school, I learned a lot about how we as Party members must always establish the left in any given situation. This experience also pushed me to better understand the Party's line and sharpen my analysis. My commitment to the Party, fighting for communism, and identification as a member of the international working class has never been stronger and I would like to thank the PLP and its members for constantly pushing me to be a better comrade. This weekend was inspiring!

★

I'm convinced. As a fellow comrade who joined the Party in late 2013, it is understood that it takes practice and consistency for one to grow into the movement (working class struggle). Although I joined the Party already, coming to the cadre school has given me the growth needed to gain a better grasp of who I am, who I was before I joined, and where I was going with my fellow comrades.

It is without a doubt that my convictions are stronger and I am clearer about what communism means for my fellow workers and me.

I am clearer about my stand against all of the oppressive forces that exists in this beautiful and terrifying world—I know my stand is our stand and we come together knowing we are as diverse as we are similar and our unity makes us very powerful…I've never been with so many genuine people as I am as of this moment.

There is more work to be done.

★

As much as possible under capitalism, we try to create a more communal society by cooking together, cleaning together, playing together, and making decisions together. That is by far my favorite part of every cadre school. It gives me hope and confidence in our communist future.

★

My experience as a high school educator and parent this weekend was one that fills me with gratitude that I am surrounded by such a dedicated and thoughtful band of comrades fighting to make our world a communist one. The anti-racist fight we are engaged in at school is strengthened by the class-consciousness this weekend's event has helped to build.

★

This year was so different than any other because I felt like I improved my knowledge on racism more than any other year. I made friends very easily. I was glad because it's like they accepted me even if I'm in middle school and they were so nice. Overall I had a lot of fun and I can't wait for next year.

★

I spent the weekend with some of the most genuine, kind, respectful human beings who've dedicated their lives to fighting for communism. At the end of my stay, I find myself wanting to share this same kindness, morality, and respect for my fellow class that I've been shown. I want to be a voice for my community. I want to make a difference. I want real change; not in the form of reform, but one that sparks a revolution in the minds of the masses of the working world. So, with that having said, I have decided to join the fight for communism.

"Nothing to run from is worse than something"

★

I have learned so much and it gave me a big purpose in life, a goal in life that I am going to chase and catch. I enjoyed talking to a lot of the people about communism and world peace and it's these conversations I never was able to have with others except for my teacher, who is in PLP. These conversations were intellectual and very fun. One of the happiest moments in my life.

I'm not a very open person, but I was able to open to these people. Now I am starting to become a communist. When I go back home, I'm going to try to convince people that I meet and talk to from potheads and suicidal people to philosophical people to understand how to change the world. I really can't wait until the revolution happens and when it does, I will do whatever I can to contribute or even lead the revolution.

★

It was inspiring in that it's showed the ability of the working class to analyze and critique the capitalist system. The discussions showed we workers can see through the capitalist lies.

★

The cadre school was truly an enlightening experience. Identity politics is not only divisive and poisonous, but are also disingenuous, and do not offer any real solutions on combatting racism. Analyzing these pieces gave me tremendous insight and confidence in understanding what racism is and how it hurts the working class. Best of all I had a chance to bond in song, games, laughter, and teamwork with a multicultural and diverse camaraderie. This is my vision for the future and society and I believe that joining PLP gave me a taste of what a progressive anti-racist communist society looks like. No matter what the bosses do to attack and distract they couldn't kill our multiracial unity.

★

Though the opportunity to have fun activities beyond politics is great, I always relish those dialectical discussions. We talked about "white privilege" and "feminist" theory. One high school student not in the Party vehemently disagreed with our line. But though she wasn't receptive, we must stay tuned in to how the bosses mislead workers into these fake-leftists movements.

One small critique I have though is that we shouldn't be immediately asking students after the school if they want to join PL before giving them some time to think about it. Becoming a communist is a huge step, one that lasts for life. People shouldn't make such decisions so fast unless they've been around for sometime. Just my two cents. Can't wait to be back next year!

★

I thought I knew the actual history of racism, but I only knew bits and pieces. This weekend I completed the puzzle. The only way to fight racism is to come together and fight as a team. Getting together and discussing ideas is a great way to start. I am considering becoming a PLP member; I just need a little more time and reassurance.

★

read the rest of the letters on ww.plp.org
in the letters section

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Communist School Cultivates Next Generation of Anti-Racist Leaders

NEW JERSEY, February 7—A Progressive Labor Party leadership school helped over 50 workers and students to become more committed, anti-racist fighters. Over two days of sharp and principled struggle, comrades and friends learned about the roots of racism in the New World.

The leadership school was a valuable experience of collectivity. It was mainly led by young women. For three days, we cooked, cleaned, played, taught, and learned together. The experience was shared by Black, Latin, Asian and white workers and students, ranging in age from 9 to 70 (see letters on page 6). There was sharp struggle, and not all of our disagreements were resolved. But we all vowed to keep talking and fighting together. On Sunday, four people joined the Party—the most powerful way to combat racism.

We discussed the invention of "race" as a ruling-class tool to divide workers and make superprofits from the enslavement of Black people. We also analyzed the dangerous dead end of identity politics, which further divides workers and deflects working-class anger into capitalist-led, reformist organizations. Most important, we clarified the necessity of a multiracial fight for communism, the only way we can smash capitalism and its racist atrocities.

After welcoming people to the campsite Friday night, including a number of workers and students who were new to the Party's ideas, we kicked off the leadership school Saturday morning by reading a section of Lerone Bennett's *The Road Not Taken*. Bennett showed how the rulers of the American colonies systematically created laws in the 17th century to control and separate the people they aimed to exploit: white, Black, and Native American. The colonial bosses laws outlawed intermarriage among these groups and differentiated between white indentured servants (who could buy their liberty in some places) and Black slaves (who were chattel property forever). These laws represented the roots of modern U.S. racism.

On Saturday afternoon, we discussed "Dear White America," by George Yancy, a Black writer whose research has been underwritten by The New York Times, the capitalists' most important mouthpiece. As a defender of white privilege theory, Yancy makes the fatal error of blaming all white people in equal measure for the racist society we live in. He makes no distinction between the capitalist bosses (of all "races") who hold state power and the workers who are exploited and oppressed by them (see next issue for a larger discussion about racism vs. white privilege theory).

By contrast, Adolph Reed, a professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, points out that liberal identity politics can only redistribute the stolen wealth of capitalism. The ultimate goal of the leaders of groups like Black Lives Matter is to share in these capitalist spoils. The ultimate goal of the revolutionary communist PLP is to smash the capitalist system and create an egalitarian society without money or privilege of any kind.✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

U.S. imperialism brought Iraq 'a thousand Saddam Husseins'

NYT, 2/17 — Baghdad — It was…a…memorial of Iraqi civilians…killed by American bombs while they slept….The destruction of the Amiriya bomb shelter…on Feb. 13, 1991, at the outset of the Persian Gulf war, killed some 408 civilians in the worst way possible: Most were burned alive….

…On the anniversary, two men from the neighborhood, now in their 60s…spoke about their memories. Each had lost several family members in the attack, and each had helped to pile the charred bodies on trucks.

One…a retired truck driver, pointed to the neglected gravestones…said: "These are just names. There are no bodies buried here. They were all burnt. You could not recognize the bodies…."

The structure remains just as the American bunker-busting bombs left it….

…Down below…photos of the victims, arranged by family, [are] fastened to poster boards….

Many of those pictured are small children….

For the two neighborhood men, [it]…was an occasion for reflection:…The gulf war began in January 1991, and so by now the United States has been using it military to shape events in Iraq for more than a quarter of a century….The next American president will almost surely be the fifth in succession to order air strikes in Iraq….

Muhammed Jamal, 60, a retired teacher,…. [said] "I am afraid for what comes next….Maybe the future will be even worse. Maybe America will create something new that will be even worse than now…."

"We had been Sunni and Shiite living together, and they divided us….They destroyed the cities…."

Taiseer Mahdi, 31…remembers the event, from when he was a young boy….

"They…[got] rid of Saddam Hussein," he said, "but they brought us a thousand Saddam Husseins."

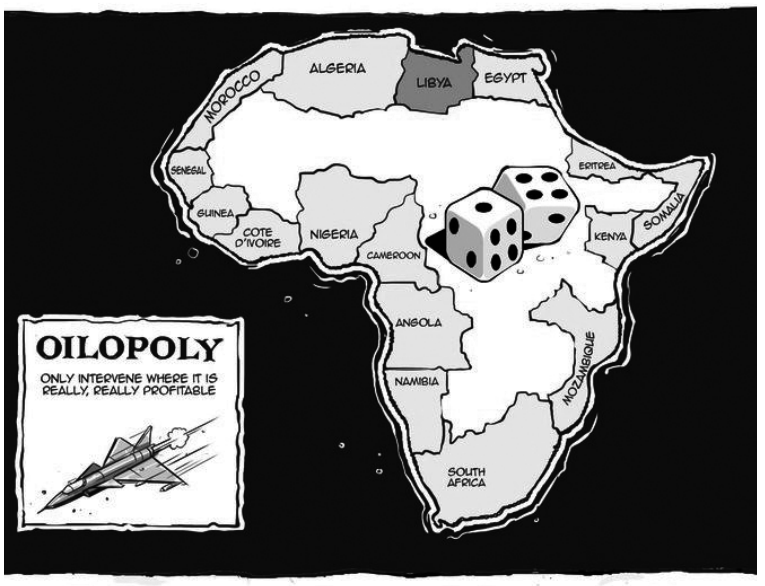
U.S. bosses have the deck stacked

NYT, 2/18 — America's political system is rigged. The deck is stacked against ordinary people….

…The 20 wealthiest Americans, a group that would fit comfortably inside a luxury private jet bound for a Caribbean island, are worth more than the poorer half of the American population….Forbes's wealthiest 100 are worth as much as all 42 million African-Americans….

…the influence of money in politics:

The pharmaceutical industry…has used its lobbying heft — it spent $272,000 in campaign donations per member of Congress last year, and it has more lobbyists than there are members of Congress — to bar the government from bargaining for drug prices in Medicare. That amounts to a $50 billion annual gift to pharmaceutical companies.



Frame-ups on the rise in the U.S.

NYT, 2/13 — In 2015, 149 people convicted of crimes…— from capital murder to burglary — were exonerated….the highest yearly total since…record-keeping began in 1989.

In that time, there have been at least 1,733 exonerations across the country, and the pace keeps picking up. On average, about three convicted people are now exonerated of their crimes every week….

…Last year's group spent an average of more than 14 years behind bars. Five had been sentenced to death….Half…involved cases in which no crime occurred at all — for example, a conviction of murder by arson that…turned out to be based on faulty fire science….

…27…were for convictions based on false confessions….most often in homicide cases in which the defendant was a juvenile, intellectually disabled, mentally ill or some combination of the three. In nearly half of all 2015 exonerations, the defendant pleaded guilty before trial….

…Some defendants, especially the young or mentally impaired, can be pushed to admit guilt when they are innocent. Some…may not be able to afford bail but don't want to spend months in pretrial detention or risk much longer sentence if they choose to go to trial.

Official misconduct — including perjury, withholding of exculpatory evidence and coercive interrogation practices — occurred in three of every four exonerations involving homicide….

…These…numbers …still understate the scope of the problem, since not all cases involving misconduct come to light.

U.S. cluster bombs killing Yemen's civilians

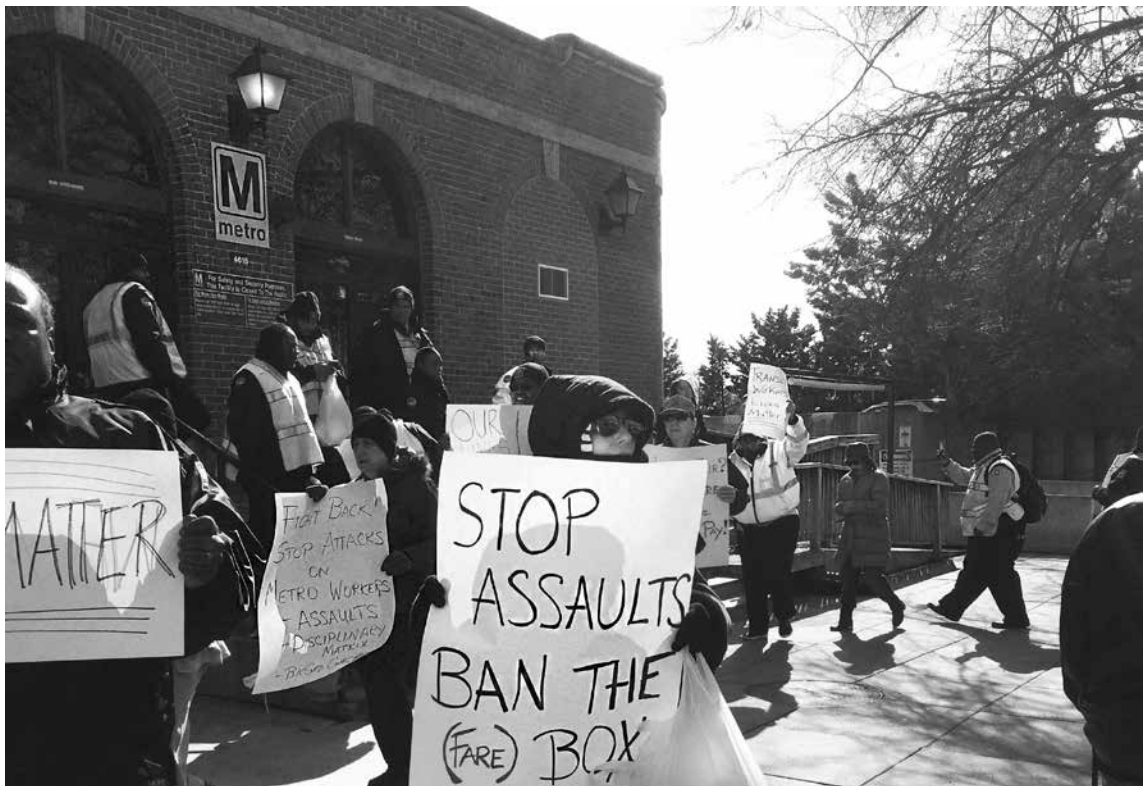
NYT, 2/15 — Saudi Arabia has fired American-made cluster munitions, banned by international treaty, in civilian areas of Yemen….

…Photographs from Yemen…show unexploded but potentially lethal remnants of American cluster weapons….The Americans have sold arms and furnished training and expertise to a Saudi-led coalition…for…an indiscriminate bombing campaign…. [and] "are blatantly disregarding the global standard that says cluster munitions should never be used under any circumstances," [said]… the arms director at Human Rights Watch….

Cluster munitions contain sub-munitions, or bomblets, that disperse widely and kill indiscriminately. Many bomblets can fail to explode, posing a threat to civilians. A 2008 treaty bans the weapons, but major arms suppliers, including the United States and Russia, have not signed it.

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE AT WWW.PLP.ORG

Workers Declare, 'It ain't right!'
DC BUS DRIVERS FIGHT BACK



WASHINGTON DC, February 10—With the help of communist leadership from Progressive Labor Party, bus drivers poured out of the 175-bus Northern Garage to protest the agency's racist disregard for their safety.

More than 35 transit workers, joined by some riders, picketed for an hour with signs calling for "Service With Protection" and "Transit Workers Lives Matter." In a lively call-and-response, workers chanted, "It ain't right!" after each example of abusive action by the bosses was called out by speakers at the rally. People driving by honked and cheered.

Instead of standing up for assaulted drivers, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) bosses are supporting the arrest, suspension and disciplining of any drivers who defend themselves when attacked.

The attacks on transit workers are racist. As the transit workforce changed from predominantly white in the 1960s to predominantly Black today, WMATA has ratcheted up its attacks. Management is determined to take back the gains that were won in the wildcat strike of 1978, led primarily by PLP members, which closed the city down for a week.

Racist Bosses Blame the Victims

Bus operators' physical and psychological welfare has been jeopardized by cutbacks in their passengers' mental health and substance use treatment, rising homelessness, and mass unemployment. Still, drivers are expected to collect fares from all riders while navigating the snarled traffic. Assaults on operators, recorded by video cameras mounted in all vehicles, include spitting and punching, with 90 percent of all incidents involving fares. The video recordings are used to justify disciplinary measures against drivers who react in self-defense.

Recently, two drivers were assaulted in separate cases. Both were suspended by Metro and one was arrested and charged with assault. The response by both municipal police and transit police is to blame the victim. WMATA bosses have piled on by subjecting victimized drivers to internal discipline.

In 2015, WMATA introduced a new disciplinary matrix that imposed harsher punishments for minor driver errors, leading to more suspensions and firings of operators. More recently, WMATA bosses have used retroactive criminal background checks to fire established older workers at the top of the pay scale.

In response to protests by PLP members and friends, a lawsuit has been filed on this issue and a grievance hearing is coming up soon.

Some operators have called for stationing police on the buses to prevent rider assaults. At our rally, a retired transit worker denounced this strategy. The siege of racist police violence in recent years has made it all too clear that the cops are more of threat than protection. Putting police on the bus would criminalize riders and divide them from the operators, which in turn would hurt workers' ability to combat abusive management practices.

What's Fair? No Fare!

At today's rally, workers demanded that WMATA eliminate driver responsibility for fare collection. In fact, WMATA could eliminate fares entirely. Riders and drivers can unite around this issue. In 2014 in Brazil, hundreds of thousands protested to demand free transportation. As one of our signs said, "What's Fair? No Fare!"

Who would pay the transit costs instead? The bosses and their federal government. The transit system is essential for developers who have built hugely profitable enterprises in downtown DC. Currently, about 50 percent of transit operating funds come from fares. Increased taxes on developers and other corporations could cover all costs. A popular refrain at the rally made this point: "I don't know, but I've been told, the Verizon Center is lined with gold!"

As the U.S. bosses' rivalry with China's bosses intensifies (see editorial, page 2), attacks on the working class will only increase. A demand for the bosses to pay challenges the capitalist system's profit motive. No worker should have to pay for a transportation system built and maintained by our class. A world based on workers' needs is possible—but only under communism.

Building Workers' Power

In July, workers in Amalgamated Transit Union 689 will face a contract fight over pensions, health benefits and wages. Today's rally is another step in empowering people to prepare for that fight.

PL'ers and workers organized the Take a Stand Team in the December 2015 union election on an anti-racist slate. They are organizing against the transit bosses' attacks, including the racist disciplinary actions and the racist retroactive background checks. Demands for shortening the wage progression (number of years needed to receive top pay), restoring retirement health benefits for newly hired workers, and fully funding the pension plan were part of the campaign. The Take a Stand Team received 1,800 votes (32 percent of the total) and came close to overturning the current president, who received less than 40 percent of the vote. Importantly, it demonstrated that many more workers are prepared to organize and strike. Through this struggle, PL'ers are building a pro-communist network of workers throughout the transit system.

They are thinking about what it means to be strike-ready, to fight for a better contract and to raise anti-racism. More than 40 workers have joined biweekly meetings and day-to-day discussions on the need for more militant and organized resistance.

Our discussions also address racist police violence and the increasing wealth of the ruling class. As a result, the need for a communist revolution and worker control over society became clearer to many friends of PLP.✪

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